

REMARKS

Claims 12-30 and 34-44 are pending in this application. Claims 12-30 and 34-44 are rejected.

Responsive to the rejection of claims 12-26, 34-41, and 43-44 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,847,116 (Dutt '116), Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 12. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 12, and claims 13-30 and 34-44 depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance.

Dutt '116 discloses a method of producing a composite wet-press papermakers felt by which one side of a textile base fabric can be given a uniform, smooth coating of polymeric resin particles fused together to provide a porous, elastic surface. A homogeneous foam, composed of resin particles, a binder material, and a solvent is applied to the textile base fabric in a uniformly thick coating. The textile base fabric is then subjected to heat, which evaporates the solvent and fuses the resin particles to each other and to the fabric base. (Abstract).

In contrast, claim 12 recites in part “applying a dispersion of particulate polymeric material to a batt of fibres, thermally activating the dispersion of particulate polymeric material and thereby softening the particulate polymeric material such that the particulate polymeric material undergoes at least partial flow and fuses to itself and to the batt of fibres; wherein the activated dispersion of particulate polymeric material results in a layer.” (Emphasis added). Applicants submit that such an invention is neither taught, disclosed or suggested by Dutt 116, or any of the other cited references, alone or in combination, and includes distinct advantages thereover.

Dutt '116 provides that resinous particles and a binder system are distributed onto the base fabric of a press felt. More specifically, a homogeneous foam or froth of polymeric resinous particles, binder material and solvent is applied to the surface of the fabric. (Column 2, lines 43-

51). All of the polymeric particulate material is retained on the surface of the fabric. (Column 2, lines 65-66). The coated base fabric 6 passes beneath a heat source 7, which evaporates the solvent in the foam 3, and fuses the particles of the polymeric resin to each other and to the base fabric 1. (Column 4, lines 9-12). Further, Dutt '116 indicates that the press felt disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,571,359 (Dutt '359) is used. (Column 2, lines 44-47). Dutt '359 discloses distributing a layer of resinous particles upon one surface of a base fabric and fusing the particles such that they bond together and with the base fabric. (Column 2, lines 51-55). Dutt '359 states that the base layer of the fabric 10 may be any conventional press felt fabric and further provides that the base layer is a woven fabric substrate of warp and weft yarns 14, 16, particles 20 fusing together and with the woven fabric substrate. (Column 3, lines 5-11; column 4, lines 1-4)(Figs. 1-2). Dutt '359 discloses that particles 20 can be replaced with fibers which are placed on the woven fabric substrate and fused to each other and the underlying substrate. (Column 4, lines 19-24).

Further, Dutt '116 provides that foam 3 of polymeric resinous particles, binder, and solvent is applied to base fabric 1 and that water can be used as the solvent. (Column 3, lines 21-23; column 4, lines 2-4). By contrast, Applicants submit that the polymeric particles of the present invention are provided in a liquid dispersion. The liquid acts as a carrier medium for the polymeric particles to ensure that the particles get into the batt structure, according to the present invention. Applicants submit that the foam or froth of Dutt '116 is not such a dispersion.

Further, Dutt '116 provides distributing foam 3 upon the surface of the base fabric 1. (Column 4, lines 5-8). In light of this provision, and further in light of the earlier reference in Dutt '116 to batt-on-base felts (column 2, lines 10-15), Applicants submit that Dutt '116 discloses applying the resinous particles onto the base but does not disclose applying the resinous particles onto a fiber batt. Further, while Dutt '359 discloses a textile fabric 10 including a base layer and

a surface layer and that the base layer may be any conventional press felt, Applicants submit that Dutt '359 discloses (like Dutt '116) distributing resinous particles on a woven base fabric itself, not on a batt on the base. The present invention, by contrast, provides for applying meltable polymeric particles in a liquid dispersion to a fiber batt and further thermally activating the particles such that they get fused together and to the batt fibers to provide a layer which includes fibers (the batt fibers) and polymeric matrix material (the at least partially melted polymeric particles) at least partially embedding the fibers of the batt. Thus, Applicants submit that, contrary to either Dutt '116 or Dutt '359, the present invention provides a composite structure. Further, during thermal activation according to the present invention, the fibers of the batt do not melt and therefore do not fuse to one another, which stands in contrast to the fibers of Dutt '359 (column 4, lines 21-24). Applicants submit that Dutt '116 and Dutt '359, thus, fail to disclose applying a dispersion of particulate polymeric material to a batt of fibers and fusing the particulate material to the batt of fibers.

An advantage of the present invention is that a composite structure is formed with the batt of fibers.

Besides being allowable because of its respective dependency from claim 12, for the reasons given above, Applicants submit that claim 16 is further patentably distinct over the cited references. Claim 16 recites in part "0.1% to 20% weight add on of the polymeric material is applied." (Emphasis added). Applicants submit that such an invention is neither taught, disclosed or suggested by Dutt '116, or any of the other cited references, alone or in combination, and includes distinct advantages thereover.

The present application at page 4, lines 12-17 indicates that this percentage (0.1% to 20% weight add on of the polymeric material) was a surprising discovery when the application states that "[i]t has been discovered that a significant impact on the fibre web structure can be realized

using this technology with relatively small quantities of particles preferably in the range from 0,1% to 20% weight add on ...”. In other words, Applicants submit that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have discovered this range via normal experimentation.

An advantage of the present invention is that it provides process consistency and is much more cost effective.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claim 12, and claims 13-30 and 34-44 depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

Claims 27-30 and 42 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dutt ‘116 and in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,298,124 (Eklund et al.). However, claims 27-30 and 42 depend from claim 12, which is in condition for allowance for the reasons given above. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 27-30 and 42 are also now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

Responsive to the objection to the Specification, “pres” has been amended to “press” as required in the Office Action.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claims. The pending claims are therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of the claims.

In the event Applicants have overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicants hereby conditionally petition therefor and authorize that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to

telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,

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